

Wednesday, May 21, 2025 @ 6pm @ OSPOB

SEWICKLEY VALLEY HISTORICAL SOCIETY PRESENTS:

Annual Meeting 2025

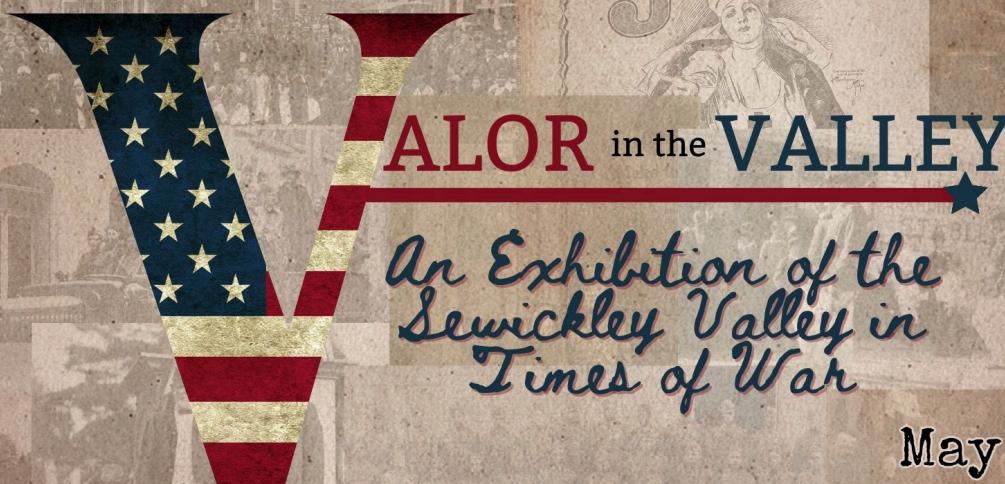
Old Sewickley Post Office Building

With the special presentation "Living History: A War Historian's Journey from Sewickley to Gettysburg" by Dr. Ian Isherwood, Associate Professor of War & Memory Studies at Gettysburg College and a 1996 Quaker Valley High School graduate.



Now through May 31, 2025

Sewickley Valley Historical Society Presents:



Annual Meeting 2025

Old Sewickley Post Office Building

SVHS invites members and guests to join us for the 2025 Annual Meeting.

All attendees are asked to RSVP in advance so that accurate numbers for seating and refreshments can be established.

Doors open at 5:30 pm

A light meal will be provided for members who arrive starting at 5:30 pm.

6:00 pm - Annual Meeting of the Membership

All are welcome to join us for the business meeting where the SVHS Board President and the SVHS Committee chairs will present their year-end reports to the members -- it is a great opportunity to learn more about the work of the society! Members will vote on the slate of new Directors of the SVHS Board as proposed by the Nominating Committee.

7:30 pm - SVHS Lecture Series

All are welcome to join SVHS as they welcome Dr. Ian Isherwood as the evening's guest lecturer and his presentation: **"Living History: A War Historian's Journey from Sewickley to Gettysburg."**

Isherwood returns to the Sewickley Valley to talk about his experiences as a professional historian at Gettysburg College. Isherwood will discuss what it is like to teach history to 21st-century college students and work as a military historian in transformational times.

This presentation is free and open to the public.

Refreshments will be available following the presentation and the *Valor in the Valley* exhibit will be open for all to visit.



Use the QR code left to be taken directly to the event registration page to sign up, or reach out to the SVHS to register today!

About Our Speaker

Dr. Ian Isherwood is an Associate Professor of War & Memory Studies at Gettysburg College, where he has taught the history of war for fifteen years. In 2022-2023, Isherwood was the Harold K. Johnson Visiting Chair of Military History at the United States Army War College.



He is the author of two books, *Remembering the Great War: Writing and Publishing the Experiences of WWI* (Bloomsbury, 2017) and *The Battalion: Citizen Soldiers at War on the Western Front* (Pen & Sword, 2024), and the co-editor of another with Steven Trout of *Serpents of War: An American Officer's Story of WWI Combat and Captivity*. **Isherwood is a 1996 graduate of Quaker Valley High School.**

VALOR in the VALLEY

May 1 - 31, 2025

Join SVHS for a special exhibition of the pieces of war-time history collected and preserved in the Collections at SVHS.

When the country needed them, residents of the Sewickley Valley rose to the occasion giving their devotion to wartime efforts, on the battle and home fronts. The devotion shaped the area into the Valley as it is known today. Join SVHS in the month of May for an exhibition of the pieces of war-related history preserved in the Collections at SVHS.

The exhibition will run the month of May in celebration of the Memorial Day season with special hours throughout the month. Visit the SVHS website for the most up-to-date information and to RSVP for the opening reception and Annual Meeting.

IMPORTANT DATES AND EXTENDED HOURS

Access to the exhibition via the SVHS Office will be available Monday - Friday, 10 am until 2 pm and during the times below, all other dates and times are subject to the scheduled use of the Community Room by Sweetwater Center for the Arts.

Tuesday, May 6, 2025 - Extended Hours 10 am - 7 pm

Thursday, May 15, 2025 - Extended Hours 10 am - 7 pm

Wednesday, May 21, 2025 - Lecture and open gallery starting at 7:30 pm

Thursday, May 22, 2025 - Extended Hours 1 pm - 7 pm

Sunday, May 25, 2025 -- Special Memorial Day Weekend Hours 10 am - 2 pm.

Saturday, May 31, 2025 - Closing Day 10 am - 2 pm

Visit Valor in the Valley after hours! The SVHS executive director will be on hand to answer any questions. At 6 pm on each extended hours evening, SVHS executive director, Amanda Schaffer, will give visitors a "peak under the glass" of the exhibit with a brief presentation on the war-time scrapbooks that will be on display under the glass.

WAR SERVICE RECORDS

Sewickley Valley Historical Society
Collecting the history of service in the Valley

While visiting Valor in the Valley, help grow the Collections at SVHS. Using provided forms - adapted from the forms of a similar initiative by the Pennsylvania War History Commission immediately following WWI - members of the community can help fill the Collections at SVHS with the stories of their, or of any member of their family's, service in the military or involvement with industrial or civic activities in service of a war spanning from the time of the American Revolution through all modern and current conflicts, and who called the Sewickley Valley home during their time of service and/or for the majority of their life.

SVHS also asks that contributors, when possible, include photographs, a sketch of life/war experience, letters, diaries, or any other interesting information to help make the new records more complete. If contributors are not ready to part with originals, copies and duplications are also welcome.



Forms and accompanying materials can be submitted to SVHS at any time, but during the "Valor in the Valley" exhibition, they can be added directly to the "Wall of Sewickley Valor" in the provided sleeves.

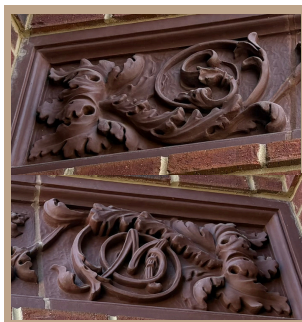
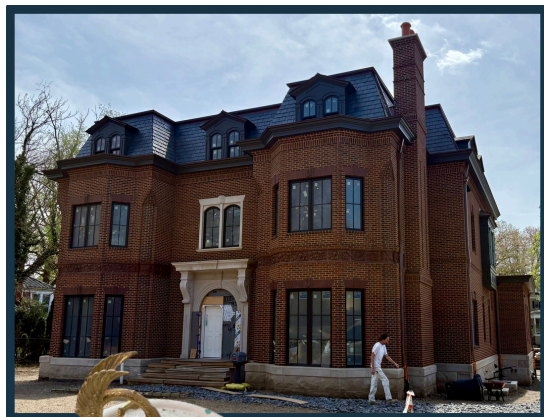
Scan this QR code to be taken to the "Valor in the Valley" event page where the survey sheet can be downloaded.

May is Historic Preservation Month!

Celebrate with the SVHS Preservation Initiatives and their following write-ups provided by the SVHS Architecture Committee.

Preservation Award 2025:

14 Beaver Road – The Merenda House



Clockwise: 14 Beaver Street, terra cotta relief, the preserved historic setback of the property, a sink salvaged from Muottas that will be used in the final design.



Over the course of 4.5 years, owners Dana and Ross Merenda have been methodically designing and building their home at 14 Beaver Street. From the home's setback and sighting to its copper spouts, terra cotta relief, stone lintels, and slate roof, this home pays tribute to design and craftsmanship ideals utilized in Sewickley Valley's grand homes built 100+ years earlier.

With assistance from Moss Architects, Dana has meticulously spearheaded the architecture and interior design, while Ross has focused more on the structural support and systems placement. As a team, they are in the midst of building a true dream home that marries Brownstone, Victorian, and Second Empire details, but remains conducive to a 21st-century family lifestyle. Very personal touches abound throughout the property. A favorite design element was their daughters' initials spelled out in vines in the terra cotta relief on either side of the front porch.

Their desire "to honor the architecture, history and community of Sewickley" can be exemplified in the repurposing of porcelain sinks, intricate grates, and decorative hardware salvaged from the Muotta's house. For demonstrating that historic craftsmanship and design can still have a place in new construction, we applaud the preservation effort of Dana and Ross Merenda.

Preservation Opportunity 2025: Historic Setbacks

There are the broad, collective aspects that distinguish and define a neighborhood including the setting, landscaping, topography, and architectural rhythm. A streetscape encompasses many of these elements. In addition, there are key defining features of individual buildings which include architectural styles, materials, and craftsmanship. Together, these two macro and micro layers of key defining features work in tandem to visually articulate the essence of a streetscape. The setback is intrinsic to the streetscape, defined as the minimum space required between a building the property line, or public right of way. Some neighborhoods may have large, sweeping setbacks with tree-lined streets, while other neighborhoods may be densely built rowhouses with no setbacks. When new construction in historic neighborhoods takes place, either through additions or new structures, the streetscape and setback are often overlooked. Streetscapes in historic districts are often redesigned without recognition of the unique historic features—such as setbacks—that defined the street during the period of significance. Buildings along the same street with the same setback create an uninterrupted viewpoint and streetscape, preserving the character and value of the neighborhood.



Photos: Sewickley Valley streetscapes exhibiting the maintenance of historic setbacks. Courtesy, Teresa Duff.

Continuing Preservation Opportunities

As identified since the category's debut
2022 - Present

Duquesne Light Company Sewickley Substation

Herbst House / St. James Convent

Historic Setbacks in the Sewickley Valley

Muottas

St. Andrews/ Watermark Academy

B.G. Shields Award in Preservation Excellence:

The Italian Gardens Project - Mary Menniti



Left to Right: Photo of Mary Menniti, The Italian Garden Project Logo, and Tommasina's Fall Garden, all courtesy of The Italian Garden Project website.

The Architecture Committee recognizes that the spaces between the buildings hold value in our built environment. These often-unnoticed spaces contribute to the history and development of the Sewickley Valley.

Growing up immersed in Italian culture, Mary Menniti enjoyed a close relationship with her Italian immigrant grandparents working in the garden beside them during summers. Having come from old-world agrarian backgrounds of subsistence farming, self-reliance, and careful use of resources, they cultivated a way of life closely connected to the earth. Mary came to know and value the gardening wisdom and love of nature that characterized her immigrant family, lessons that led her to found The Italian Garden Project.

When Mary moved to Sewickley, she discovered a wonderful Italian community that still gardens the traditional way, like her grandfather. "I realized, though, these gardens will not be around forever. The gardeners are getting older and because Italian immigrants have always had such a strong belief in education and insist that their children focus their energy toward advancing themselves through their schooling and careers, this heritage is not being passed on as it had been for generations."

Mary found herself compelled to share these gardens with friends, as if discovering lost and precious works of art. In 2009, in collaboration with Fern Hollow Nature Center, she began giving tours of these backyard gardens along Chestnut Street and Centennial Avenue. "People love being in these gardens, too. There is so much to see and learn. As the tour-goers speak with the gardeners, they are amazed at their knowledge. People marvel at how naturally and almost instinctively gardening comes to them. The gardeners, in turn, are amazed that there is such newfound interest in something that they have done all their lives. Not only are these gardens interesting from the perspective of producing an abundance of vegetables, fruits, and herbs, but also from an environmental and sustainability standpoint. Italian gardeners have been eco-friendly before anyone started using the term. Rain barrels, composting, seed saving – any form of conserving resources has always been a way of life for them."



Roma Pole Beans, Tommasina's Fall garden, Sewickley, PA

To learn more about
The Italian Garden Project
and to view the beautiful
photography documenting
the gardens:

www.theitaliangardenproject.com



Mary felt an urgency to document and preserve this knowledge before it may be lost. Out of that urgency, grew The Italian Garden Project™. Its mission is to celebrate the joy and wisdom inherent in the traditional Italian American vegetable garden, preserving this heritage and demonstrating its relevance for reconnecting to our food, our families, and the earth. In 2012, The Italian Garden Project worked with the Sewickley Garden Council to document Giovanni and Maria Macchione's garden (Locust St. & Thorn St.) resulting in an archived compilation for the Archives of American Gardens in the Smithsonian Gardens collection.

Since starting the Italian Garden Project, Mary has sought out traditional Italian American vegetable gardens throughout the country, photographing and recording them with their proud gardeners. She has collected hundreds of seeds from these gardens which represent the most cherished vegetables of Italian immigrants who came to America, those seeds that just couldn't be left behind. Only the best of the best would have been deemed worthy of the passage from the Old World to the New. These are seeds that have been passed down through families for generations. When they arrived in America, they were lovingly propagated in backyard gardens and traded as valuable commodities within Italian communities. Heirloom seeds such as these, which have been nurtured over hundreds of years and traveled across continents, are at risk of being lost and their histories forgotten. Mary has taken on saving these seeds, serving as their caretaker. Now, a partnership with Truelove Seeds and the Italian Garden Project will ensure that these unique varieties will continue to flourish and provide authentic flavors of the past well into the future.

"Our vision is for The Italian Garden Project is one where we can honor worthy individuals and learn from them. It will be a space where we can preserve important aspects of Italian American history and share the beautiful memories of our childhoods. There is much to learn if we are willing to listen, look, and remember."

Preservation Grant 2025: Sewickley United Methodist Church

The numerous historic assets defining the character of the Sewickley Valley are a reliable source of both pride and joy. All too frequently, however, organizations are unable to source funding for much-needed restoration work and structural repairs.

Recognizing the funding challenges faced by non-profit organizations including religious institutions as well as municipalities responsible for the upkeep of these resources, the Sewickley Valley Historical Society decided to take action in 2018 by creating a preservation grant program. Grants provided by this program are not limited to historic buildings but may also be used for the improvement and restoration of outdoor public spaces with unique features that define the cultural landscape of the Sewickley Valley.

Sewickley Valley Historical Society presented the 2025 Preservation Grant to the Sewickley United Methodist Church [SUMC] for exterior masonry work. SUMC is a historic and picturesque landmark in the heart of Sewickley. With its 172-foot clock tower steeple, it can be seen from almost any part of town. The church, chartered in 1852, has remained at the same location ever since. While there have been changes and upgrades, it has been and remains a constant 'Lighthouse' in the Sewickley landscape. Through all the changes in Sewickley over time - stores come and go, businesses come and go, restaurants come and go, people come and go, and faces change, yet the SUMC stands strong, visible, and relevant.

Community impact plays a large role at SUMC. As part of the Church's historical and architectural relevance, it endeavors to meet the needs of the people around the community. The church houses a non-secular preschool for 3 and 4-year-olds and serves as the host site for AA groups, community luncheons, community concerts, blood drives, and preventative health testing and screening events. Quaker Valley Middle School uses the church as a safety zone should they face an emergency. The playground is open to the public. Volunteers use the church kitchen to prepare and deliver meals to people with food insecurities. Outreach extends well beyond the walls of the services offered in the church.

By funding masonry work that included updates to an accessible entrance, the SVHS Preservation Grant helps SUMC ensure that its historic building can continue to be a vibrant community hub.



Above: Sewickley United Methodist Church with our new "Preservation Happens Here!" signage designed to help promote the Architectural Preservation Grant in the community and encourage future applicants.

MEMBERSHIP NOTES

Patrons, Benefactors, Friends, Sponsors

Many Thanks to the following who since our last newsletter have supported SVHS with gifts in addition to dues.

- Robin Bolea
- Virginia and Brent Elliott
- Bruce Williamson

Special Contributions

- Duncan P. Whittaker, Jr. Estate

Welcome New Members!

- Sally Edgerly and Family

Business Memberships



Members Reminder:
Our membership year runs from July 1 - June 30. We always welcome you to check to see if you are up-to-date with your membership, but renewals will begin with the annual appeal in the late summer.

**REMEMBER to SHARE
YOUR EMAIL with SVHS!**

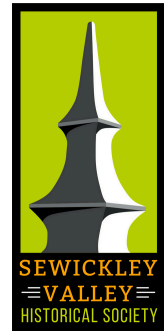
Having an active email address on file at SVHS is important -- it is how we share news and information in-between meetings and newsletters. If you are not currently receiving emails from SVHS please reach out to make sure we have your correct address in our database!



RENEW ONLINE!
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200 BROAD STREET
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SVHS Nominating Committee

The following members were named to the **SVHS Nominating Committee** for 2024-2025:

Marty McDaniel, Chair

Susan Holton
John Poister

Rob Thomas
Joe Zemba

The Sewickley Valley Historical Society Nominating Committee (listed above) proposes the following members as officers and directors, to be elected at the Annual Meeting, Wednesday, May 21, 2025. At that time, nominations may be made from the floor, provided the person nominated has agreed to serve if elected.

**Current directors moving to an officer position
in year two of their first-year term:**

Robin Bolea, Secretary
Sean Rollman, Treasurer

Directors for a first two-year term:

Alison Conte Palmira Gerlach
Chris Driscoll Dana Merenda
Rob Dunbar Wayne Murphy
Jay West

The election for Officers and Directors of the 2025-2026 SVHS Board will be held at the Annual Meeting.

SVHS Committee Chairs

Archives: John Kroeck

Development: Robin Bolea

Membership: Shelley Murray

Architecture: Teresa Duff

Finance: Ivan Hofmann

Program: Verna Corey

*All committees are looking for active and engaged members.
If you are interested in joining an SVHS committee, please reach out to the SVHS office.*

Sewickley Valley Historical Society

President
Marty O'Brien

Vice-President
George Berry, III

Secretary
Janet Oellig

Treasurer
Ivan Hofmann

Directors
Heather Blaine
Robin Bolea
Michael Cevarr
Teresa Duff
Will Long
James Mohn
Shelley Murray
Robert Patterson, Jr.
Sean Rollman
Shelley Wygant

Executive Director
Amanda Schaffer

Signals is written, designed, and edited by SVHS Executive Director, Amanda Schaffer.
Visit our website, www.sewickleyhistory.org | e-mail us at info@sewickleyhistory.org | or call us at 412-741-5315.
SVHS offices are open 10am - 2pm Monday - Friday.
Appointments are encouraged.